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AUTHOR Holman, E. Riley
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ABSTRACT

It is a responsiblilty of the educational leaders to develop a climate that encourages creativity. This promotion of creativity may be instrumental in finding answers to some of the most glaring problems in education, and yet the subject of creative leadership has received little attention. A review of the literature reveals some basic assumptions about creative leadership, and suggestions are listed for what a creative leader can do to develop a climate that encourages creativity. The educational leader must be willing to stand alone and encourage others to find ways to make creativity and mass education compatible. Additional research is needed on the role of the creative educational leader. Appendixes list characteristics of creative leaders and detail several courses that focus on the development of creative ability. (DCS)

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# Creative Educational Leadership:

# A Future Necessity

E. Riley Holman

West Chester University

Department of Childhood Studies and Reading

Paper Prepared for Summer Institute,

Ed.D. Early Childhood Programs, Nova University,

Palm Beach Gardens, Florida

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Creative Educational Leadership:

A Future Necessity

The major thrust of this paper details the responsibility of the educational leader in developing a climate that encourages creativity. Most educational leaders have the power to become catalysts who encourage creativity rather than torpedo it. The educational leader can set creativity in motion.

First, the educational leader must understand a number of basic assumptions about creative leadership. Fifteen such assumptions are detailed with appropriate references. Second, there are a number of things creative leaders can do to develop a climate that encourages creativity. Nine suggestions as gleaned from the literature are presented. Finally, creative educational leaders must be willing to stand alone and encourage others to find ways to make creativity and mass education compatible.

Scott (1980), Mars (1980), Sandler (1973), and Burstiner (1972) all call for additional research into the role of the creative educational leader. They emphasize the need for longitudinal studies as well as research to identify effective educational leaders, with follow-up studies pinpointing more specifically the ways in which they encourage creativity in their associates, colleagues, and subordinates.

Some years ago a young, rigorous teacher entered the profession with all the enthusiasm of a firefly. He proceeded to manage his first classroom in a way that exemplified the creative teachers with whom he had worked in teacher training.

The educational leader, at the time, walked the corridors of the school carrying with him an aura of superiority and authority that gave the impression that there was nothing about the educational setting that could not be answered by a visit to the throne room where he generally held court.

Mr. Firefly learned early the value of ideas in this situation when he pulled from his limited experience to offer a suggestion related to a problem the faculty had been asked to discuss. The educational leader, in front of the faculty, responded, "Isn't it interesting how so many of us can pick up strange, useless ideas from our student teaching experiences!"

The optimism and enthusiasm with which Mr. Firefly entered the profession continued to get in his way when one day he asked if he could have additional books to start an individualized mathematics program. The educational leader responded by lecturing on the uselessness of individualized programs and instructing Mr. Firefly to continue to assign each child in the class the same page in mathematics. "After all, what would the teacher do next year?" questioned the educational leader.

Finally, the light in Mr. Firefly began to dim when the most dramatic incident occurred as the faculty wrestled with a naughty problem. Two faculty meetings were devoted to a discussion of the

issue. Finally, at the third faculty meeting a vote was taken by the educational leader. Twenty-one teachers voted "yes" for a change; one teacher voted "no". After the vote was taken, the educational leader announced, "Well, I don't care what you've voted--we will continue to do it the way it is being done. This way is best." Mr. Firefly left this school after his second year of teaching.

We can assume that educational leaders who recognize creativity in themselves and become catalysts in encouraging the ability in others develop an environment where creativity spreads (Abrell, 1983, p. 106). However, if we make this assumption, we must also assume the opposite: that educational leaders who do not value its importance can develop a climate where creative ability is constantly blocked and eventually killed.

Fortunately for Mr. Firefly, over subsequent years he has had the pleasure of working with many creative leaders so that the light continues to glow. These special men and women hold a very important key that might well be instrumental in finding answers to some of the most glaring problems in education. But, considering the importance of the key they hold and the flurry over creativity in general, the subject of creative leadership appears to have received little attention.

Leonard R. Sayles (1984, p. 1) professor of business administration, addresses the role of leaders and managers interchangeably when he concludes that we are ignorant of their work, misunderstand their contributions and fail to appreciate their importance. He

maintains that "as a society we probably know more about the kings and queens of the Middle Ages (because of Mr. Shakespeare and his friends) than we know about what leaders do".

A review of the Journal of Creative Behavior, since its first appearance in 1967, indicates that among several hundred articles published therein, only six or seven deal more or less directly with organizational climate for creativity (Mars, 1981, p. 202).

An ERIC search focusing on the role of the educational leader in encouraging creativity from 1966 to the present revealed only 11 articles on the subject. Of these, only six were useful in defining specific ways in which educational leaders can become more creative themselves and encourage creativity in those with whom they work. A further search of dissertation abstracts produced 12 additional references, none of which really targeted this subject. No useful sources for this discussion were discovered in computer searches using early childhood, leadership, and creativity as key words.

During the past two decades, numerous articles, research studies, and sources have been directed to classroom teachers and how they might develop the creative abilities of their charges. While the focus of the development of creativity in any educational sub-group is commendable, one is forced to wonder if the inculcation of this vital ability can ever really take place if educational leaders fail to understand its importance or value its significance. Indeed, one wonders if our attention in promoting the development of creativity has not been directed to the wrong group. At least

we must realize that if attention is given to creativity and if leadership is going to effect change, it is going to have to be by everyone in education (Diomede, Feb./Mar. 1974, p. 88).

Generally, effective educational leaders comprehend the importance of creativity; however, many would argue that there is too little encouragement of it in educational institutions. Many educational leaders profess to give credence to creativity but fail to understand its nature or the ways in which it can be encouraged. Considering all the flurry, the development of creative ability in educational institutions continues to be "meat on the steer instead of beef on the bun."

Most educational leaders have the power to become catalysts who encourage creativity rather than torpedo it. The need for creative leaders is paramount if education is to become more than habitual, uniform, and steadfastly monotonous. The educational leader can set creativity in motion. The literature stipulates some ways in which the educational leader can become a creative leader. First, the creative leader must understand a number of basic assumptions about creative leadership gleaned from a review of the literature, as follows:

1. Developing creative leadership skills takes time (Sandler, 1973, p. 95).
2. Creative thinking is vital to leadership (Osborne, 1963, p. 376).
3. When leaders become examples of creativity and when they consistently recognize the creative achievements of those

with whom they work, creativity spreads (Abrell, 1983, p. 106).

4. "The personality of creative leaders can be characterized as relatively more effective, both intrapersonally and interpersonally, than either creatives or leaders." (Taylor, 1978, pp. 221-222)
5. Creative leaders share like personality characteristics with other creative people regardless of the field of endeavor (see Appendix A).
6. "Unless our schools and our school systems are soon directed by those possessing some creativity, we will become chained to education that is routine, rote, systematically boring, unaccommodating, unimaginative, and filled with mediocrity." (Southerland, 1980, p. 2)
7. Creative leaders are faced with a continuing problem with respect to fostering creativity. They are obliged to exercise at one and the same time a control function and a releasing function. These functions must be understood in their separateness and in their relatedness (Meil, 1961, pp. 222-223).
8. "The leader's responsibility for trying to develop an organizational climate for creativity is central and cannot be delegated." (Mars, 1981, p. 201) "Leadership involves responsibility." (Harris, 1977, p. 568)
9. Creative leaders must possess judicial judgment to a marked degree. They must also excel in resourcefulness.

Then, too, they need to recognize the value of creativity and know how to tap and encourage the creative power of associates (Osborne, 1963, p. 376).

10. Creative leadership recognizes the potential in people (Nejedlo, 1983, p. 4) (Smart, 1984, p. C5). Obviously, creative leadership makes no sense except in a context of great respect for teachers and their potentialities (Kampmeier, 1976, p. 360). The most important source in an organization is the idea generating ability of the people (Smart, 1984, p. C5). Creative leaders must guard against being so carried away with their own creativity that they rob others of the chance to be creative (Torrance, 1962, p. 208).
11. Creative leadership exists to establish and maintain a climate where individuals may develop and maximize their contributions (Nejedlo, 1983, p. 4).
12. Creative leadership feels a "real regard for the power of ideas" (Osborne, 1953, p/ 377). ". . . leaders must become idea seekers and idea brokers rather than idea chokers . . ." (Abrell, 1982, p. 105).
13. Creativity can be increased in various ways, including specialized training and educational experiences (Mars, 1981, pp. 200-201).
14. "Creativity can, within broad limits, be encouraged or discouraged, rewarded or punished, turned on or turned off." (Mars, 1981, p. 201)

15. Correlation studies related to the creativity of creative persons, leadership, and the leader are limited (Scott, 1980, p. 28) (Taylor, 1978, p. 222).

Second, there are a number of things creative leaders do to develop a climate that encourages creativity:

1. Recognize the vital importance of creativity and adopt a creative attitude (Abrell, 1983, p. 105). To facilitate creativity, one must thoroughly understand the process (Fiene, 1979, p. 37). The global ramifications of failing to provide opportunities for creative expression are staggering (Fiene, 1979, p. 35).
2. Cultivate and practice his/her own creative ability (Mars, 1981, p. 201) (Southerland, 1980, p. 5) (see Appendix B). "Give yourself a 'wack on the side of the head' to shake yourself out of routine patterns, to free yourself to rethink problems, stimulate new questions . . . " (Smart, 1984, p. C5). If leaders "possess any ounce of creativity, then they cannot escape the thrill of each new day" (Southerland, 1980, p. 3).
3. Praise creativity, recognize creative works and find ways to reward positive innovation and uniqueness (Abrell, 1983, p. 105) (Mars, 1981, p. 201). The leader stimulates the creative productivity of individual members (Parnes, 1977, p. 45).
4. Create a climate in which imaginative ideas flourish and creative activities are myriad (Nejedlo, 1973, p. 4)

(Osborne, 1983, pp. 376-377). Create a climate which motivates people to use both left and right hemispheres of the cortex (Abrell, 1983, p. 105).

5. Furnish many opportunities for group sessions that focus on solving problems by using techniques and strategies that promote creativity, i.e., group and individual brainstorming, problem solving, simulation, etc. (Abrell, 1983, p. 105)(Fiene, 1979, pp. 31-32). Use the brainstorming technique to solve problems and initiate change by increasingly accepting all ideas as valid, writing down options, and considering the consequences before sifting out and discarding ideas and solutions (Abrell, 1983, p. 105).
6. Open up communications by encouraging staff to speak their feelings, offer suggestions on all manner of things and offer constructive criticism (Abrell, 1983, p. 106). Operate a suggestion system to harvest ideas (Osborne, 1957, p. 106). Be a good listener, be sincere in soliciting ideas--suspend negative judgments on the creative work of co-workers (Abrell, 1983, p. 106).
7. Give co-workers and staff the responsibility for making decisions and the freedom to actually make them (Abrell, 1983, p. 106).
8. Whenever possible, eliminate obstacles which impede or discourage creativity (Abrell, 1983, p. 106).
9. Find ways to enable staff members to be around other creative people. Creative people encourage, stimulate, and compliment each other (Abrell, 1983, p. 105). Arrange

conferences where challenging people may be heard in person (Meil, 1961, p. 241).

Finally, creative educational leaders must realize that the path they take may be a lonely one. To make educational improvements, they need to be discontented with things as they are. They have to start asking questions about things that are wrong and make guesses about causes, possible solutions, and possible consequences. They may find distrust among associates and subordinates for being an "idea person." However, if they transmit their enthusiasm to others and allow participation, there will come a flood of ideas. The creative educational leader must strive for the balance that makes the difference between trusting and distrusting an "idea person". (Torrance, 1962, p. 208).

The creative educational leader must encourage others to find ways to make creativity and mass education compatible. Our educational institutions can survive if everyone is taught to think creatively and independently. Education can foster intellectual competence through individualized and divergent thinking when the leadership sees these characteristics as desirable and important.

So much of the literature focuses on leaders in other fields, particularly in the business world. The creative educational leader is encouraged to "hitchhike" in making adaptations to education (Kampmeier, 1976, p. 360). Even in the field, educational leaders are encouraged to apply creative educational programs for teachers to their particular circumstances. While some application may be desirable, what is needed are more studies related to the role of the creative educational leader in particular.

Scott (1980), Mars (1980), Sandler (1973), and Burstiner (1972) all call for additional research into the role of creative educational leaders. They emphasize the need for longitudinal studies as well as research to identify effective creative educational leaders, with follow-up studies pinpointing more specifically the ways in which they encourage creativity in their associates, colleagues, and subordinates. Additional studies that discover organizational factors important to creative persons would reveal knowledge of what creative members of an organization value and would furnish more systematic ways of providing leadership.

In the fall, we can continue to varnish the school floors, dust the books, and call the roll. In the spring, we can clear out the desks and allow the dust to pile up. Somewhat overdramatic? Maybe, but unless the educational leader becomes a creative educational leader, education itself may be covered with the dust of complacency and boredom. Eventually, our performance as leaders may become as outmoded as our inability to be creative.

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## Appendix A

Scott (1980, p. 28) attributes characteristics of creative leaders that are common to both creativity and leadership. They are as follows:

high degree of skill in communication, both verbal and written
broad knowledge, readily available
willingness to take risks and try things
independent thinking
flexibility
adaptability
intelligence
curiosity
resourcefulness
originality
ingeniousness

Torrance (1962, p. 66) identified several traits of the creative person. Stein (1974, pp. 58-61) lists 19 characteristics of creative people as determined through the literature. Of the characteristics summarized by Torrance and Stein for creative people in general, most are listed by Scott for creative leaders in particular.

Appendix B

Several colleges and universities offer courses in psychology or education that focus on the development of creative ability. Most of these are designed to help participants understand the psychology or the sociology of creativity as defined by Mars (1980, p. 199):

> The psychology of creativity deals with the nature of creativity, including how to identify creative persons, creativity testing, prediction of creative behavior, types of creativity, descriptions of the creative process, personality characteristics of creative persons, personality motivating factors, relationships between creativity and other personal characteristics (e.g., intelligence) and so forth.
>
> The sociology of creativity, or how to nurture creativity, deals with such matters as environmental factors, developmental factors (e.g., education, training, implementation), incentives and motivation and obstacles and inhibitors. One important aspect of nurture is what may be called organizational climate for creativity, dealing basically with what steps organizational leaders can take to improve the climate for creativity within their organizations (assuming that they are interested in doing so).

Some colleges and universities have training sessions which focus more specifically on developing creative ability in oneself. These are three significant training programs:

1. The Creative Problem Solving Training Program consists of a series of procedures, including brainstorming, that were suggested by Osborne and added to by Parnes. This program of training is conducted under tha auspices of the Creative Education Foundation, Buffalo, New York, of which Parnes is president.

   Parnes has also been responsible for the instigation of a two-year creative studies project at the University of Buffalo.

2. A very sophisticated method for stimulating creativity, originated by Gordon, is called Synectics. Through his Synectics Education Systems in Cambridge, Massachusetts, Gordon provides training in synectics as well as consulting services associated with the use of his procedure (Fiene, 1979, p. 31).

   Another synectics program is headed by Prince, entitled Synectics, Inc., Cambridge, Massachusetts. This program provides a variety of opportunities and services involving the use of synectics.

   /Synectics works on a problem by "making the strange, i.e., the problem, familiar". This involves becoming acquainted with the problem and its various components. This is then followed by a process of making that which has become familiar, strange (Stein, 1975, p. 272)./

3. The Center for Creative Leadership is a non-profit educational institution whose mission is to improve the practice of management by providing practical, research

based tools for recognizing and developing creative leadership potential. The overall goal of research of the center is to nurture leaders through an understanding of leadership. The attempt is to prepare people and organizations to accept creativity and innovation as a natural part of the workplace. The director of the center is Dr. Stanley S. Gryshiewicz, Center for Creative Leadership, 5000 Laurinda Drive, P. O. Box P-Z, Greensboro, North Carolina 27402-1660; telephone (919) 288-7210.

Each program listed will send information about their services which includes descriptions and times of training programs. A fairly thorough description of Creative Problem Solving and Synectics is offered by Stein (1975).